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Caregiver authorization affidavit: enrolling a child in school and approving medical care

When a child moves in with a grandparent, aunt, older sibling, or family friend, the first two walls are almost always the same: the school wants proof of authority and the clinic wants a consent signature. A caregiver authorization affidavit is the short, sworn form that gets most families past both walls without going to court.

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IMPORTANT NOTE

This is general information, not legal advice. The form's name, who may sign it, how long it lasts, and whether it must be notarized all vary by state. Confirm your state's version with a legal aid office, a self-help court center, or your kinship navigator program before you rely on it.

WHO THIS GUIDE CAN HELP

- **For professionals**
  This is the fastest unblock for informal kinship placements. Pair it with the district's foster/homeless liaison so enrollment happens the same week rather than after a custody hearing.
- **For supporters**
  Many relative caregivers have never heard this form exists and assume they need a lawyer and a court date. Sharing this page is often the whole intervention.

WHAT THE AFFIDAVIT IS

It is a one- or two-page sworn statement saying that a child lives with you and that you are the adult responsible for day-to-day decisions. In most states you sign it yourself — no judge, no filing fee, and in many states no parent signature required for the school-only version.

- **It documents the living situation**
  You state the child's name, the child's address (your address), your relationship, and that you are the adult the child lives with. Schools and clinics need something in writing; this is the something.

- **It transfers day-to-day authority, not custody**
  The parent keeps their parental rights. Nothing is taken away from anyone. The form simply lets the adult in the house sign the papers that daily life requires.
- **It is temporary and revocable**
  It generally ends when the child stops living with you, when the parent revokes it, or after a set period defined by state law. If the arrangement becomes long-term, guardianship gives you sturdier footing.

+ WHAT IT DOES AND DOES NOT UNLOCK

Two versions usually exist: a school-only version, and a fuller school-plus-medical version that often requires a parent's signature. Ask for the one that matches your need.

- **Enroll the child in the local public school**
  Consent to surgery or non-routine treatment (varies)
- **Access grades, records, and parent-teacher meetings**
  Receive the parent's child support or benefits
- **Consent to routine medical and dental care (fuller version)**
  Move the child out of state permanently
- **Consent to school-related medical care and immunizations**
  Change the child's legal name
- **Sign field trip, sports, and after-school forms**
  Override a court's custody or visitation order
- **Register for school meals, transport, and tutoring**
  Serve as proof of guardianship in a court case

+ HOW TO GET ONE AND USE IT

- **1. Find your state's official form**
  Search "[your state] caregiver authorization affidavit" or "[your state] caregiver affidavit school enrollment." Prefer a court, state education agency, or legal aid website over a paid form site — the official version is almost always free.
- **2. Check whether a parent must sign**
  School-only versions are frequently caregiver-signed alone. Medical-consent versions more often require the parent. If the parent is incarcerated, mail the form with a stamped return envelope and clear instructions; facility notary access varies, so ask the facility's counselor.
- **3. Notarize if your state requires it**
  Many banks, credit unions, libraries, and shipping stores notarize for free or a few dollars. Bring photo ID and do not sign until you are in front of the notary.
- **4. Make copies before you hand it over**
  Give copies — not the original — to the school office, the pediatrician, the dentist, and the after-school program. Keep the original in your paperwork folder with the birth certificate and immunization record.

- **5. If the school still refuses**
  Ask by name for the district's foster care liaison or homeless liaison. Federal rules protect enrollment for children in unstable housing situations, and these staff members handle exactly this scenario. Put your request in writing and keep a copy.
- **6. Revisit in six months**
  If the child is still with you, ask a kinship navigator or legal aid office whether guardianship makes sense. Affidavits get questioned; a court order does not.

+ CALIFORNIA SPECIFICS: THE CAREGIVER'S AUTHORIZATION AFFIDAVIT

California's version is set out in Family Code sections 6550 through 6552, and section 6552 contains the exact form language. It is one of the more caregiver-friendly versions in the country. Verify the current text at the sources listed at the end of this guide before you rely on any detail below.

- **Any adult the child lives with can sign the school part**
  If a child lives in your home, you can complete the affidavit and use it to enroll the child in school and to consent to school-related medical care, including immunizations and physicals required for enrollment. You do not need to be related to the child for this part.
- **A qualified relative can also consent to medical and dental care**
  Family Code 6550 defines a 'qualified relative' — including a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling, step-parent, and other listed relatives. A qualified relative who signs the affidavit may authorize routine medical and dental care for the child, not just school matters.
- **No notary, no filing fee, no court date**
  California does not require the affidavit to be notarized and there is nothing to file with a court. You complete it, sign it, and hand copies to the school and the clinic. That is the whole process.
- **Schools and providers are protected when they rely on it**
  California law protects a school or health care provider that acts in good-faith reliance on a completed affidavit. If an office pushes back, this is the point to raise calmly — they are not taking on liability by accepting it.
- **The parent still outranks you**
  A decision by the child's parent or legal guardian supersedes the caregiver's decision under the affidavit. The affidavit adds an authorized adult; it does not remove anyone's rights.
- **It ends when the living arrangement ends**
  The affidavit is only valid while the child lives with you, and you are expected to notify the school if that changes. If the arrangement is going to last, ask legal aid about guardianship — it holds up under scrutiny in a way an affidavit does not.

+ IF A SCHOOL IN CALIFORNIA STILL SAYS NO

This is usually a front-desk knowledge gap, not a legal problem. Work up the ladder in this order and keep everything in writing.

- **1. Bring the statutory form, not a homemade letter**
  Use the affidavit language from Family Code 6552 or the version your county office of education or a California legal aid office publishes. Front offices accept a form that looks like the form they were trained on.
- **2. Ask for the district's foster care liaison or homeless liaison**
  Every California district has both. They handle immediate enrollment for children in unstable living situations and they know the affidavit exists. Ask by title.
- **3. Escalate to the county office of education**
  County offices field enrollment disputes and can call a district directly. Put your request in email so there is a dated record.
- **4. Call a legal aid office or the state kinship navigator**
  California legal aid organizations handle school-enrollment refusals routinely, usually at no cost. Our kinship navigator guide walks through how to reach yours.

+ HOW OTHER STATES NAME AND HANDLE IT

The document exists almost everywhere, under different names and with different limits. These are the search terms to start with, not legal conclusions — confirm the current rules with a legal aid office or self-help court center in that state.

- **California**
  "Caregiver's authorization affidavit" (Family Code 6550–6552). No notarization; qualified relatives get medical consent as well as school authority.
- **Texas**
  "Authorization agreement for nonparent relative" or "authorization agreement for voluntary caregiver." Generally requires the parent's signature and notarization; check who qualifies as a relative.
- **Ohio**
  "Caretaker authorization affidavit." Grandparent-focused, notarized, and filed with the juvenile court in the county where the caretaker lives — check the filing step.
- **Florida**
  "Power of attorney for care of a minor child" or "concurrent custody" for relatives. Check whether your situation calls for the court route instead.
- **North Carolina**
  "Consent to medical treatment of a minor" plus the school's residency and domicile affidavit. Check the school's enrollment packet first — districts differ.
- **Washington**
  "Kinship caregiver authorization" and "affidavit of school enrollment." Check whether your school district accepts a caregiver affidavit or wants a parent authorization.

+ THE SAME FORM, DIFFERENT NAMES

If a search for one phrase turns up nothing, try the others — states label this form very differently.

- Caregiver's authorization affidavit
- Caregiver affidavit or caregiver consent form
- Authorization agreement for nonparent relative or voluntary caregiver
- Educational consent form or affidavit of school enrollment
- Guardianship authorization affidavit
- Power of attorney for the care of a minor child (a related but usually broader document)

+ QUESTIONS FAMILIES ASK

- **What is a caregiver authorization affidavit?**
  It is a sworn one- or two-page form stating that a child lives with you and that you are the adult handling day-to-day decisions. Relatives and close family friends use it to enroll a child in school and, in the fuller version, to consent to routine medical care — without going to court and without the parent losing any rights.
- **How do I fill out a caregiver authorization affidavit?**
  Use your state's official form. You will list the child's full name and date of birth, your name and address, your relationship to the child, and the date the child began living with you. Sign only in front of a notary if your state requires notarization, then give copies to the school, clinic, and any after-school program.
- **Does the parent have to sign it?**
  It depends on your state and on which version you use. School-enrollment versions are often valid with only the caregiver's signature. Medical-consent versions more commonly require a parent's signature. If the parent is incarcerated, ask the facility counselor about mail and notary access.
- **Does a California caregiver's authorization affidavit have to be notarized?**
  No. California does not require notarization and there is no court filing or fee. You complete the affidavit described in Family Code sections 6550 through 6552, sign it, and give copies to the school and to any medical or dental provider.
- **Can I enroll a child in a California school without custody?**
  Yes. If the child lives in your home, a completed caregiver's authorization affidavit lets you enroll the child and consent to school-related medical care, even without custody or a court order. If the front office refuses, ask by title for the district's foster care liaison or homeless liaison.
- **Who counts as a qualified relative in California?**
  Family Code 6550 lists them — grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, step-parents, and other named relatives. A qualified relative who signs the affidavit may also authorize routine medical and dental care, not just school matters. A non-relative caregiver's authority is limited to school and school-related medical care.
- **Is a caregiver affidavit the same as guardianship?**
  No. An affidavit is a temporary, revocable statement that lets you handle everyday matters. Guardianship is a court order granting legal decision-making authority. If the child will be with you long term, or if anyone disputes your authority, guardianship is the sturdier option — legal aid can often help you file at low or no cost.

SOURCES YOU CAN CHECK YOURSELF

- **California Family Code 6550 — caregiver's authorization affidavit**
  https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=FAM&sectionNum=6550
- **California Family Code 6552 — the affidavit form language**
  https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=FAM&sectionNum=6552
- **California Courts Self-Help Guide — options other than a guardianship**
  https://www.selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/guardianship/other-options

KEEP GOING

- **Kinship care navigator**
  https://www.myfairygodparents.org/resources/guides/kinship-care-navigator
- **Kinship navigator programs by state**
  https://www.myfairygodparents.org/resources/guides/kinship-navigator-programs-by-state
- **The #FKLM Family Blueprint**
  https://www.myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint

More guides and family resources: myfairygodparents.org/resources

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